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ABSTRACT

The Rosen Scholars Program was a privately funded program for the support and mentorship of talented disadvantaged urban youth. After 6 years of planning and operation, the program was evaluated to assess effectiveness in terms of program objectives and outcomes. The evaluation was conducted by doctoral candidates from Teachers College, Columbia University, New York. The stated goal of the Rosen Scholars Program was to provide capable disadvantaged college-bound students with the resources and support they needed to enroll in college and complete their freshman year successfully. Each year, one or two high school sophomores from two comprehensive New York City high schools were selected through a systematic, competitive process, and these students were mentored from 11th grade through the freshman year in college. Mentoring support included assistance in college selection and application, enrichment opportunities, social skills development, personal development support, and support in the transition to college. The scholars were mentored by a group of highly successful business people, academicians, and psychologists, rather than by a single mentor. The Program defied current wisdom about the importance of linking mentees to mentors with similar social, class, gender, or racial characteristics, and defied the notion that good mentors must be trained. The Program's results support the assertion of the research literature that mentoring has a powerful impact on students who lack family resources and are in the high range of academic ability. Evaluation findings show that the Program distinguished itself from other larger mentor programs in its ability to establish a developmental style of mentoring. (SLD)

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THE ROSEN SCHOLARS PROGRAM

A New Design For Mentoring Disadvantaged Youth For Postsecondary Success

EVALUATION SUMMARY

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April, 2001

EVALUATION SUMMARY

PURPOSE:

The Rosen Scholars Program was a privately funded program for the support and mentorship of talented disadvantaged urban youth. After six years of planning and operation (1991-1997), the Program was evaluated to assess effectiveness in terms of Program objectives and demonstrated outcomes. The evaluation research was conducted by doctoral candidates of Teachers College, Columbia University with guidance from their Program Advisor.

The Rosen Scholars Program was found to have demonstrated significant sustaining accomplishments through multi-dimensional individualized mentorship. The evaluation concludes that while the Program's outcomes substantiate some of the research findings in the field of mentoring, in several aspects a significant number of the Program's outcomes differed from developed theory and reported research.

As the mentoring of youth is a prominent issue among educators, community-based organizations, and foundations, consideration of the Rosen Scholars Program, with its novel design and delivery, and its demonstrated accomplishments, may provide an important new model for future development in the arena of mentoring. Therefore, the Rosen Scholars Program, Advisory Board is committed to disseminating information on the Program's evaluation outcomes, and to providing the Program's design and delivery information and materials to interested parties.

GOAL:

The stated goal of the Rosen Scholars Program was to provide capable, disadvantaged college-bound students with needed resources and supports to enable them to enroll in a college or university of their choice, and to successfully complete their freshman year.

PROGRAM DESIGN:

Annually, one to two high school sophomores from two comprehensive New York City high schools were selected through a systematic competitive process. The selected students were mentored from the eleventh grade through the completion of their freshman year in college.

Mentoring support included: assistance in college selection and application, a variety of enrichment opportunities, social skills development, personal development support, and support in transition to college.

Unlike traditional mentoring programs, the selected "scholars" were mentored by a group of highly successful business people, academicians, and psychologists, rather than by a single mentor. Mentors continued their relationships with the students throughout college and graduate school.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS:

Program delivery was accomplished through application of the following procedures and services.

- Selection of Scholars through an innovative, systematic, documented process that focused on student's untapped talents, goals, and needs
- Continuity of comprehensive student-centered mentoring services from eleventh grade through the freshman year of college
- Mentoring of each Scholar by a cluster of mentors who demonstrated a a broad array of professional expertise, talents, and skills, and who had strong knowledge and experience within the community, as well as with local and national institutions
- Scholars were exposed to dynamic social capita and active verbal dialogues among experienced and concerned professional adults

PROGRAM COMPONENTS: (cont.)

- Mentors' roles were varied and evolved in response to individual Scholars' needs
- Mentors often acted as liaison between high school staff and various college officials

EVALUATION FINDINGS:

In consideration of the Rosen Scholars Program's core goal, the significant evaluation findings are that students in the Program:

- experienced an easier transition to post-secondary education than their high school peers
- matriculated at more selective colleges and universities than their high school peers
- developed an effective ability to identify and access support networks, and to adapt to their new surroundings
- developed long-term sustaining relationships with the adults who served as sponsors
- relationships among scholars and mentors became meaningful additions in the lives of the students and the adults who served as sponsors

IMPLICATIONS:

Evaluation of the Rosen Scholars Program produced findings that have implications for similar programs as well as for related research. The following describes those findings that are particularly noteworthy.

IMPLICATIONS: (cont.)

. ***The Program's sponsorship approach was on-going, interactive, and student centered, rather than program centered,*** **and provided its participants with quality mentoring that emphasized: trust building, intensive commitment, and constant accessibility.**

This form of mentoring comes close to "natural mentoring," as defined by the development of a relationship between a guiding adult and a less experienced youth as is most typically found within extended families, church, or neighborhood extension groups. The growth of near "natural" links between teens and adults is an important feature of the Rosen sponsorship approach.

. **The Program deviated from other mentor programs by providing participants with an array of mentors rather than designating one mentor.**

The depth of support and services provided by a group of sponsors acting in consort, as well as interacting individually, is unlike the usual paring of mentors and mentees reported by other programs.

. **The Program defied current wisdom as to the importance of linking mentees to mentors who have similar social, class, gender or racial characteristics, and defied the notion that good mentors must be trained.**

Board members represented both ethnic and professional diversity, with ample opportunity for participants to individually select mentors and activities.

. **The Program's results support the research literature's assertion that mentoring has a powerful impact on students who lack family resources and are in the high range of academic ability.**

The research literature suggests that selecting "mentor prone" highly motivated youth aids in the success rate of intervention programs.

IMPLICATIONS: (cont.)

. **The Program's mentorship *stressed both academic skills development as well as enhancing students' critical thinking frameworks.***

The dual approach had positive effects on high school and first-year college outcomes among program participants, and provided the students with ample opportunities to participate in open and critical discussions with adults.

. **Over time, the Program sponsors' behavior have demonstrated a strong, sustained impact on participants' academic and social development.**

The quality of mentoring involved an in-depth approach to a reflective praxis with all socially related activities, as well as long-term commitment. The mentors collaborated with participants in establishing long and short-term goals.

. **The Program has established a unique mentor model with components well documented and available for dissemination and replication.**

Available Program materials include: a) selection criteria, b) nominees' questionnaire, c) interview questions, d) review criteria and procedure, e)cost/effectiveness analysis design, e) design for review and assessment.

SUMMARY OBSERVATIONS:

The evaluation of the Program's activities and accomplishment viewed the Program in the context of recent research on intervention programs for at-risk youth, mentoring activities, dealt with the common features and comparisons of the students selected, reviewed the findings and implications for the creation of other mentorship and intervention programs, and drew conclusions about the possible applicability of Program's model for other target groups.

SUMMARY OBSERVATIONS: (cont.)

By placing the Rosen Scholars Program within the stream of research literature, the distinctiveness of the Program becomes apparent. ***The Program has distinguished itself from other larger mentor programs in its ability to establish a "developmental" style of mentoring, whereby the mentors are moderating and modulating each scholar's expectations based on frequent dialogues and in-depth analysis of each decision placed before the mentee.*** This approach fosters relationships that are both satisfying to the scholar as well as enduring. Consistent with the literature on interventions, research of the pscho-social aspect of the mentor-mentee relationship involves a fervor toward enhancing the scholar's sense of "self" and a heightened self-esteem.

The summation of the mentoring and support provided to the students is best described as a "sponsorship approach". Sponsorship entails placing adults in roles of guides and de-coders for the students in the face of difficult, strange, or hostile environments. It also suggests that the adult has a continual, hands-on, and personal relationship with students. This is not, however, a relationship built between people with similar backgrounds or interest, but rather, that of an adult authority figure and a willing receptive charge.

Finally, while other mentoring programs were created in a rush and viewed by policymakers as a "cheap and easy solution", the Rosen Scholars Program attended to a myriad of socio-political, administrative, and economic issues during a pre-planning phase of approximately two years.

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THE ROSEN SCHOLARS PROGRAM

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